Public Perceptions of How Media and NGOs Contribute
to Civil Society in Croatia's Accession to the EU

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Both media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have important roles to play in the development of civil society across the world. The media provide information about democratic change, champion social and political issues, and their investigative reporting can expose corruption of political leaders. NGOs also contribute to civil society by advocating for the under-represented, serving marginalized publics, and agenda setting. The purpose of this article is to explore the ways in which Croatian citizens perceive the media's and NGOs' contributions to a civil society as their nation moves toward European Union (EU) accession. It reports the results of a longitudinal case study during a pivotal time in Croatia's accession process (2000-2002).

Key words: civil society, media, non-governmental organizations, Croatia

"Civil society" is emerging as a frequently mentioned term when scholars view economic and social transitions across the world. For those who view civil society as a positive concept, it describes how a society functions. In a civil society, there are institutions and organizations that mediate the relationship between government and the people (O'Connell, 2000). Civil society is both a noun — "Germany is a civil society" — as well as an adjective that reflects how things operate in everyday life — "Civil society organizations are meeting to discuss community problems." There has been growing academic interest in the concept of civil society. Political scientists (Barber, 1998; Putnam, 2000) and economists (Neace, 1999) have posited how civil society is created, maintained, and in some cases, destroyed. The field of Communication also has valuable insights into civil society. Civil society has been informed by the rhetorical tradition (Hauser, 1997, 1998; Hauser & Benoit Barne, 2002), information and media development (Spichal, Calabrese, & Sparks, 1994), and collaborative inter-organizational relationships between media and NGOs (Doerfel & Taylor, 2004; Taylor & Doerfel, 2003).

Yet the term civil society is not without its detractors, and its very meaning is contested. Most recently, Dutta Bergman has argued that global civil society efforts by international agencies such as USAID only serve to continue a top-down colonializers-to-colonized relationship (Dutta-Bergman, 2005a, 2005b). When indigenous media and NGOs in poorer nations are financially supported by governments from more economically developed nations, this "humanitarian aid" perpetuates global imbalances.

This article takes the position that civil society is what Klvana (2004) noted as a normative concept that describes "a means to advance an open society" (p. 41). Civil society as an open society has the potential to be empowering to all members of the society. One of the most successful civil society movements in the last decade occurred in Croatia. The nation of Croatia, once part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, gained its independence in 1991. It then experienced a war instigated by a repressive nationalist government. When the 1995 Dayton Peace Accord ended the war, dozens of humanitarian organizations started funding civil society initiatives in the region. Their goal was to foster political change in Croatia before its nationalist leaders could once again destabilize the entire region. Economic support and mentoring from USAID, the Soros Open Society Institute, the British Civil Society Initiatives, and the European Union (EU) fostered the development of a two-pronged approach to civil society. First, the international community sought the creation of an objective media free of political influence. Second, they also sought to develop a network of civil society organizations that would help to stimulate electoral reform and social change (USAID, 2000). This two-pronged effort sought to create the foundations for civil society and the eventual accession of Croatia to the EU.

The purpose of this article is to explore how the media and NGOs have contributed to the development of civil society in Croatia. Specifically, the interest of this research is in changes in public perceptions of different types of media, and how the public understands the roles of NGOs as Croatia moves through a pivotal period in its EU accession. Through a longitudinal case study (2000-2002), the researchers sought evidence to determine which media outlets were perceived to be contributing to the goals of civil society, and which NGOs were active, influential, and trusted. More importantly, for media and press scholarship, the researchers sought to detect evidence of any relationships between media preferences and citizens' inclination to participate in civil society.

The first section of this article explores the role that media organizations and NGOs can play in the development of civil society. The second part details the research questions and methodology used in a two point-in-time analysis of the development of civil society in Croatia. The third section presents and discusses the results. The final sections discuss the emergence of a civil society sector and the future roles for media and NGOs in Croatia as the move to accession continues.

NGOs and Media Organizations

Two groups, in particular, play important roles in the development of civil society. The first, non-governmental organizations and social cause groups, work on behalf of issues. NGOs are organized groups of individuals, some small and others quite large, that are not yet institutionalized. NGOs can maximize their efforts by working with the media to provide information subsidies about social issues (Gandy,

1982).

Media organizations, the second group, are also crucial to the development of civil society (Taylor & Kent, 1999). Media organizations that are independent of political influence perform an important function in civil society (Ramaprasad, 2003). They disseminate factual information that people use to make decisions. Moreover, because of the agenda setting function of the media, they are opinion leaders on key topics. The media also serve as watchdogs to ensure that government officials and businesses are held accountable for their actions (Ramaprasad, 2003). The media are "the most critical of all civil society institutions" because they allow for communication between institutions, organizations, the government, and the public (Shaw, 1996, p. 31). The media, by disseminating information, informing the public about social and political topics, and by being willful or unwilling agents of agenda setting contribute to civic discourse.

Research about civil society has examined "global civil society" and how the media help or hinder the cause. For instance, Pfau, Cho and Chong (2001) have studied how the use of media influences perceptions about the democratic process. Jacobson and Jang (2002) reviewed the relationship between the media, war, peace and global civil society. They noted that while war and peace news coverage is quite common, "the nexus of peace, media, and civil society is understudied" (p. 348). Tehranian (2003) has also supported this claim.

The former Soviet Union and its East Bloc allies all controlled their media sector and placed it under the direction of the government. Gross (2002) reported on the various ways that media, popular culture, and democracy are now being played out in Eastern Europe.

> Media studies can reveal the potential of mass communication to affect change, the constraints or opportunities of the sociopolitical reality, and nature of social culture. In the Eastern European case, media studies reflect a process political, social, economic, culture and individual transition, transformation, and adjustment. (Gross, 2002, p. 26)

Taylor and Kent (2000) studied the media transition in Bosnia-Herzegovina and found that different types of media play different role in that civil society transition. Later research about Bosnian media by Taylor and Napoli (2003) showed that Bosnians were beginning to rely less on politically motivated media and trust independent media more for news and information. It is the media's role in what Gross (2002) called "transition, transformation, and adjustment" that has prompted multiple studies about media and public opinion in post-communist nations. Yet, data-driven research that specifically measures the role of media civil society is only just emerging. This paper attempts to fill this void by studying what Jacobson and Jang (2002) called the "nexus" of civil society — publics, media, and NGOs.

The Context of the Civil Society Transition in Croatia

Croatia was a member of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Yugoslavia was once considered the model multi-ethnic nation where Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, and Slovenians all lived together in a high standard of socialist prosperity. Marshall Broz "Tito" has been credited by historians as

the founder of the Yugoslavian nation. The Deutsche Presse-Agentur GmbH (DPA), Germany's leading news agency, reported that a 2003 poll published by the Croatian weekly paper, *Nacional*, found Tito to be "the greatest Croat who ever lived," because he led the partisans against the Nazis and made Yugoslavia the only East European nation to successfully avoid Soviet domination (DPA, January 1, 2004, p. 1). Tito was a charismatic but authoritarian leader who governed Yugoslavia through a one-party system. All institutions, including the media, served the state. Tito never identified a political successor, and the nation experienced a power vacuum when he died in 1980.

Tito's death prompted the creation of a rotating Yugoslavian presidency that had little power. Nationalist leaders soon filled this power vacuum across all regions of Yugoslavia. Slovenia and Bosnia held referendums for independence from Yugoslavia. Croatia proclaimed its independence in October 1991 and was recognized as an independent state in February 1992. Croatia's new president, Franjo Tudjman, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), a nationalist party, began to persecute Serbs living in the newly formed state (Glenny, 1996; Silber & Little, 1996). The Serb minority waged an extensive war in the Krajina region in 1992 and remnants of the Yugoslavian navy bombarded Croatia's seaside with explosives. The newly formed Croatian army eventually defeated the Serb paramilitary forces in Operation Storm and drove them to pro-Serb regions in Bosnia and Yugoslavia. By the end of 1995, more than 200,000 Serbs had left Croatia.

When the leaders of Croatia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia signed the Dayton Peace Accord in 1995, the Tudjman government and the HDZ were viewed by the world community as a nationalist, destabilizing, and unpredictable partner. A major part of the peace plan was to ensure that democratic elections would be held in each nation to rid Bosnia and Croatia of their nationalist leaders. Significant amounts of international humanitarian assistance were devoted to Croatia to accomplish three objectives: to help establish accountable and transparent government; to foster the development of a civil society sector that would work for political and social reform; and to create an alternative media to help facilitate the development of civil society (Taylor & Doerfel, 2003). All of these steps were intended to help Croatia meet the standards for EU membership.

At first, the international community's aid appeared to have little effect. Tudjman's political party continued to win elections throughout the 1990s and many feared that Croatia would never experience democracy. In 1998, Franjo Tudjman was diagnosed with cancer and he died in December 1999. A parliamentary election was called for January 2000 and a presidential election scheduled for February 2000. The HDZ had, up to this point, dominated the political arena, and the opposition had been unable to generate any momentum for political reform. President Tudjman's illness and subsequent death created an important opening. In 1999, as the president's health deteriorated, there emerged a highly motivated civil society movement and a strong independent media sector.

The 2000 elections brought the hope of political change to Croatia. The HDZ lost its monopoly of seats in Parliament and a new party and leader emerged. In January 2000, the people overwhelmingly elected members of the SDP-led coalition. One month later, the presidential elections saw Stephan (Stipe) Mesic elected as president. Many international civil society organizations attributed the defeat of the HDZ

to a new era of civil society in Croatia. They applauded the independent media and NGO sector for their efforts to inform the Croatian public about the excesses of the former government and to communicate the various platforms of reformist-minded candidates and parties (USAID, 2000).

One of the first tasks of the new ruling party and president was to "depoliticize" the national media outlet HRT (Croatian National Television and Radio). In 2000, the government voted for a new public service charter for the largest and most influential media outlet in the nation. Beginning in 2000, HRT would become a public service media organization with no ties to any political entity.

The NGO sector also emerged from the 2000 elections stronger from its increased visibility during the election season. Organizations such as Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG), Voice 99 (GLAS 99), Babe (a women's group), Green Action (an environmentalist group), and Croatian Helsinki Human Rights (HHO) worked together to inform citizens about the elections and explain the issues and platforms of *all parties*. This research study seeks to understand the contributions of these media and NGOs from this watershed moment in 2000 to the end of 2002, as Croatia's leaders prepared the final application for EU membership.

Method

Zagreb: The Media and NGO Capital

Zagreb, the site for the study, is the cultural, economic, and media capital of Croatia. Approximately 25% of the 4 million Croatians live in Zagreb. Most work in the service or manufacturing sector. Croatians have a high literacy rate, and Zagreb is a dense media market with numerous television stations, radio stations, daily papers, and weekly papers vying for limited advertising revenue. Croatia's economy has suffered since its independence; unemployment is quite high (20%). The average Croatian has about $16,000 a year in purchasing power (CIA Factbook, 2007). Croatia initially hoped to join the European Union in 2007 or 2008, but it appears that either 2009 or 2010 is a more likely target window due to its leaders' unwillingness to find and hand over war criminals from the 1991-1995 civil war.

As the capital, Zagreb is home to the nation's parliament and is the county seat of government for the surrounding towns. There is a vibrant NGO sector in Zagreb, with most of the international and national organizations headquartered there. There are a variety of civil society programs in Zagreb that attempt to foster public participation in civic activities. NGOs regularly hold public forums for discussions, and the local media outlets often cover these events. However, since achieving independence in 1991, Croatians have been disappointed with the transition out of communism and nationalism. A newspaper poll conducted by *Vecernji List* found that 68% of Croatians believe that "Croatia did not fulfill their expectations as an independent state" (DPA, January 15, 2004, p. 1). Reasons for this dissatisfaction include the stagnant economy, high unemployment, and corruption of the privatization transition.

Procedures

Surveys were collected from Zagreb during the summers of 2000 and 2002. The first questions

were one part of a national survey collected in late 2000 that sought to evaluate USAID's political transition grants in Croatia. Professional translators worked with the research team to translate the survey questions into the Croatian language. Demographic questions, including those dealing with age and gender, were also part of this survey. A second data set was collected in late 2002 as part of a media research grant sponsored by The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). The two point-in-time study was intended to capture the period between Croatia's inclusion in the EU Stabilization Association (SAP) process in late 1999 and the time leading up to its formal application to the EU in early 2003.

Members of a national NGO with experience in survey research administered the surveys. Researchers conducted a pilot study to fine-tune the instrument. Data collection lasted approximately three to five days in each location. Surveyors were given detailed instructions and collected the surveys during different times of the day in various high traffic locations around Zagreb.

Measures

Valued channels for information gathering. Respondents were asked to identify, on a 5-point Likert scale (with 5 meaning "strongly agree" and 1 meaning "strongly disagree"), their level of agreement to statements concerning what they believed to be the most important channels for gathering information when they needed to make a decision. Channel choices included: 1) newspapers; 2) radio; 3) the Internet; 4) personal contacts; and 5) television.

Media uses. The channels that people use to gather information, and perhaps more importantly, what influence those channels have on what they do with that information can help us understand how the media contributes to civil society (Pfau et al., 2001). The researchers sought to understand the different ways in which Croatians use media. While there is an established line of uses and gratifications research (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1982, 1985), the authors first sought a general understanding of the respondents' media consumption patterns. Respondents were asked to respond, using a 5-point Likert scale, to the following statement — I use the media: 1) to obtain information; 2) to make decisions; (3) for entertainment; 4) to pass information to others; and 5) to compare my ideas to others.

Civil society scale for media organizations. The literature suggests that, for media outlets to contribute to the development and sustainability of civil society, they must meet certain editorial standards in their content (Jakubowitcz, 1995). Tehranian (2002) has argued that media in transitional nations need to gain credibility to serve as forces of peace and civil society. The researchers developed a civil society scale for media organizations based on three measures: importance as a news source, objectivity in reporting, and serving the public interest. Our primary interest was in tracking the evolutions of public perceptions of civil society contributions made by the different media outlets. Respondents were asked to respond, again on a 5-point Likert scale. Perceptions of a media outlet's civil society value were measured via three statements — Source name: 1) is an important source for news and information; 2) is objective; and 3) serves the public interest. These three measures were combined into a civil society measure for each media outlet, and reliability scores were calculated.

Table 1 identifies the media outlets in Croatia that served as variables in the study. The Croatian Radio and Television (HRT) is now a public corporation, owned by the Republic of Croatia. It is headquartered in Zagreb and reaches all parts of the nation. HRT operates three terrestrial TV channels (relayed over satellite), plus a satellite-only channel. It receives "about 50 % of its annual budget from the tax on television sets and radios in Croatia" (IREX, 2001, p. 36). HRT Radio is also widely heard. It has regional stations in all of the major population centers in Croatia. According to a 2003 listener survey of 16,000 Croatians, HRT Radio has approximately 16% of the Zagreb market share. The Croatian Cable Network (CCN) started broadcasting in 1999. It provides news programming for re-transmission by local TV stations outside of the capital. One of its most critically acclaimed programs is The Daily News. CCN is one of HRT's main competitors. IREX, the international media development donor, credits CCN for "changing Croatian State TV (HTV) more than any other legal, institutional, or political agent" (2001, p. 33). CNN has about 30% of the national television market share.

Table 1.
Overview of Croatian Media Outlets.

Outlet Name	Variable	Description
Croatian National TV-Radio	HRT	Now public service, Former HDZ mouthpiece
Croatian Cable New	CCN	All news programming, Competitor to HRT-TV
Radio 101	R101	Independent radio station, Provocative news content
Zagrebacki Radio	ZAG	Zagreb-based station, Older audience
Otvoreni Radio	OTV	Zagreb-based station, Older audience
Jutarnji List	JL	Daily newspaper 109,500 daily readers
Vecernji List	VL	Daily newspaper 134, 900 daily readers

Vecernji List (Evening Paper) is the biggest newspaper in the country, with 19.2 % of the total newspaper market share. *Vecernji List* has 14 regional issues and boasts the most readers in Croatia. The Austrian company Styria owns the paper and over 70% of its revenue comes from advertising. *Jutarnji List* (Morning Paper) is published by Europa Press Holding. It is 49%-owned by West Allgemeine Zeitung. Approximately 55% to 60% of its revenues come from advertising (IREX, 2001).

Otvoreni Radio and Zagrebacki Radio are Zagreb-based radio stations. According to the 2003 listener survey of 16,000 Croatians, Otvoreni Radio has approximately 19% of the Zagreb market share in the 15-59 age group, and it is listened to outside of the capital. Its market share throughout the entire nation of Croatia is estimated to be approximately 15 %. Zagrebacki Radio has a 5.6% audience share in the capital, but few listeners outside of Zagreb. Radio 101 is one of the oldest independent radio stations in Croatia. Its music programming is very popular with young people, and its news content is considered provocative (USAID, 2000). In Zagreb, Radio 101 has approximately 17% market share of the 15-59 age group audience and 5% of the national listening audience.

The sample organizations included two television stations, three radio stations, and two daily newspapers. Each of these outlets competes with others in its group as well as across media channels for advertising and public support.

Public Interest in Civil Society

To gauge Croatians interest and understanding of civil society, the researchers asked respondents to indicate if: 1) civil society organizations are important for improving the situation in Croatia; 2) I want to participate in civil society; 3) civil society organizations should cooperate with the government to improve the situation in Croatia. Responses were again based on 5-point Likert scales. Open-ended follow-up questions asked respondents to identify the names of NGOs in Zagreb that were: 1) most active; 2) most trusted; and 3) most influential in civil society development.

Research Questions

In addressing the issue of the role of the media in the development of civil society in Croatia, this study first sought background information on the media usage of Croatian citizens, and whether the dynamics of Croatian media usage have changed over time. In addition, this study examined citizen perceptions of both their media outlets and NGOs in relation to civil society initiatives, and whether these perceptions have changed over time. Finally, this study examined the possible relationship between citizens' media usage and their willingness to participate in civil society initiatives. The specific research questions investigated in this study are as follows:

RQ1. What information sources do Croatian citizens rely upon most heavily for information?
　　　RQ1a. Has citizen reliance upon these information sources changed over time (2000-02)?

RQ2. What are the primary uses of and gratifications sought by Croatian citizens in their media usage?
　　　RQ2a. Have these uses and gratifications changed over time (2000-02)?

RQ3. How do Croatian citizens perceive the media's contribution to civil society?

     RQ3a. Have these perceptions changed over time (2000-02)?

RQ4. What are citizens' attitudes towards NGOs and participation in civil society?

     RQ4a. Have these attitudes changed over time (2000-02)?

RQ5. Is there a relationship between usage of different channels of information sources and citizens' willingness to participate in civil society?

Results

Descriptives

This study employed survey methods to understand evolving public perceptions of how media and NGOs contribute to civil society development in Croatia. Trained native-language speakers administered written questionnaires to more than 420 Croatians. Of these, 412 were complete enough to use. Interviews were conducted in Zagreb shortly after the first free and fair election in 2000 (n = 411). A follow-up study (n = 401) was conducted two years later, in 2002, to measure changes in public perceptions of media and NGO contributions to Croatian civil society. The gender of the respondents in this study was fairly evenly split in both time periods. In 2000, there were (n = 200) males and (n = 208) females. In 2002, there were (n = 190) males and (n = 204) females. The mean age of the respondents for 2000 was 36.64 (SD = 15.29); for 2002, the mean age was 33.50 (SD = 12.65). The demographics closely mirror published studies that show the mean age for Croatians is approximately 37 years old (CIA Factbook, 2007).

RQ1 and RQ1a addressed the issue of the information sources relied upon most heavily by Croatian citizens. To address this issue, citizens were asked which of the following information sources they relied upon most heavily for information: newspapers, radio, the Internet, personal contacts, or television. This question was asked in both Time 1 and Time 2 of the study, allowing for comparisons across the two timeframes.

Table 2 presents the usage frequency for five different sources of news (newspapers, radio, interpersonal contact, the Internet, and television), with higher scores (1-5 scale indicating higher usage levels). As Table 2 indicates, in 2000, television and newspapers were the most important news sources for Croatian citizens (TV = 3.85; Newspapers = 3.77; p > .05), followed by radio (3.59), then personal contacts (3.12), and, at a distant fifth, the Internet (2.17).

Table 2.
Usage Frequency of News Channels in Croatia, 2000 and 2002.

Source	2000	2002	t
Newspapers	$3.77^{c,d}$ (392, 1.18)	$2.27^{b,c,d,e}$ (395, 1.16)	18.00**
Radio	$3.59^{c,d,e}$ (387, 1.24)	$3.45^{a,c,d,e}$ 1.60 (381, 1.09)	
Internet	$2.17^{a,b,d,e}$ (308, 1.43)	$2.58^{a,b,d,e}$ (372, 1.06)	-4.31**
Personal Contacts	$3.12^{a,b,c,e}$ (345, 1.39)	$2.97^{a,b,c,e}$ (362, 1.44)	1.50
TV	$3.85^{c,b,d}$ (405, 1.17)	$3.94^{a,b,c,d}$ (384, 1.00)	-1.07

Note. Superscripts indicate significant differences (paired samples t-test) between information sources at p < .05, utilizing Bonferroni correction; a = newspapers, b = radio, c = Internet, d = personal contacts, e = TV.

Note. ** p < .01 (independent samples t-test).

Note: n values and standard deviations in parentheses.

Significant changes took place, however, in 2002, with newspapers declining significantly in importance from 2000 to 2002, dropping from second to last (2000 = 3.77; 2002 = 2.27; p < .05), and the Internet increasing significantly in importance (2000 = 2.17; 2002 = 2.58; p < .01), though still only ranking fourth among the news sources assessed.

RQ2 and RQ2a addressed Croatian citizens' media usage from a usage and gratifications perspective. Table 3 reports Croatian citizens' responses to a five-item scale (1 = low; 5 = high) for the

five primary media uses and gratifications categories. Looking first at 2000, the results follow the fairly typical pattern, with entertainment rating the highest (3.75), followed by obtaining information (3.53). All of the other uses and gratifications categories received mean scores below three. However, in 2002, we see a significant decline in the extent to which Croatian citizens utilized the media for entertainment (2000 = 3.75; 2002 = 2.26; p < .01). We see a similarly significant decline in the obtain information category (2000 = 3.53; 2002 = 2.92; p < .01). In contrast, there is a significant increase for both the making decision (2000 = 2.34; 2002 = 3.63; p < .05) and the passing information (2000 = 2.74; 2002 = 3.45; p < .01) categories. As a result, these latter two usage and gratifications categories displace entertainment and obtaining information as the two most prominent categories in 2002.

Table 3.
Media Uses in Croatia, 2000 and 2002.

Uses & Gratifications	2000	2002	t
Obtain information	$3.53^{b,c,d,e}$ (407, 1.07)	$2.93^{b,c,d,e}$ (399, .89)	8.83**
Make decisions	$2.34^{a,c,d,e}$ (406, 1.23)	$3.63^{a,c,d,e}$ (398, 1.02)	-16.25**
Entertainment	$3.75^{a,b,d,e}$ (408, 1.15)	$2.26^{a,b,d,e}$ (400, 1.05)	19.16**
Pass information	$2.74^{a,b,c}$ (406, 1.17)	$3.45^{a,b,c,e}$ (398, 1.21)	-8.44**
Compare my ideas to others	$2.81^{a,b,c}$ (405, 1.31)	$2.72^{a,b,c,d}$ (398, 1.03)	1.10

Note. Superscripts indicate significant differences (paired samples t-test) between uses and gratifications at p < .05, utilizing Bonferroni correction; a = obtain information, b = make decisions, c = entertainment, d = pass information, e = compare my ideas to others.

Note. ** p < .01 (independent samples t-test).

Note: n values and standard deviations in parentheses.

RQ3 and RQ3a addressed Croatian citizens' perceptions of the extent to which the various major media outlets available to them serve civil society. To tap into this concept, a civil society service scale was created from questions asking citizens' perceptions (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree) of the importance, objectivity, and service to the public interest of each media outlet. Reliability tests for this scale produced alphas ranging from .92 to .81 across the different media outlets. Table 4 reports the results. Note, however, that in 2000, only HRT and R101 were assessed, whereas the full spectrum of media outlets was assessed in 2002. This, of course, limits comparisons between 2000 and 2002, as well as the extent to which it is possible to answer RQ3a. It is possible, however, to assess and compare the perceived performance of the major Croatian media outlets in 2002.

Table 4.
Perceptions of Media Service to Civil Society for Croatian Media Outlets, 2000 & 2002.

Civil Society Scale

Outlet 2000	2002		t
HRT	2.96 (331, 1.05)	$3.36^{b,c,e}$ (338, 1.31)	-4.29**
R101	3.64 (326, 1.10)	$3.62^{a,c,e,f}$ (316, 1.05)	.15
CCN		$3.10^{a,b,d,e,g}$ (300, .85)	
OTV		$3.37^{c,e}$ (307, 1.0	
ZAG		$2.38^{a,b,c,d,f,g}$ (256, .87)	
JL		$3.32^{b,e}$, (347, .87)	
VL		$3.40^{c,e}$ (334, .83	
paired t	-7.98**	NA	

Note. Superscripts indicate significant differences (paired samples t-test) between media outlets at p < .05, utilizing Bonferroni correction; a = HRT, b = R101, c = CCN, d = OTVI, e = ZAG, f = JL, g = VL.
Note. ** p < .01 (independent samples t-test).   Note: n values and standard deviations in parentheses.

Looking first at HRT and R101, we see that R101's performance was perceived as significantly better than that of HRT (R101 = 3.64; HRT = 2.96; p < .05). By 2002, HRT's perceived performance had improved significantly (2000 = 2.96; 2002 =3.36; p < .05), while R101's perceived performance remained relatively unchanged, though still significantly better than HRT's. When we look at the rest of the media outlets assessed in 2002, we see that most score in the mid- to low 3 range, with the exception of ZAG, with a score of 2.38. Thus, most of the media outlets appear to be performing comparably in terms of their service to Croatian civil society.

RQ4 and RQ4a addressed citizen attitudes toward NGOs and participation in civil society. Table 5 presents citizens' responses to statements regarding whether NGOs are important for improving the situation in Croatia, whether NGOs should cooperate with the government to improve the situation in Croatia, and whether the respondent wants to participate in civil society (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). As Table 5 indicates, in 2000, Croatian citizens agreed fairly strongly with both of these statements (IMP = 3.67; GOVT = 3.97).

Table 5.
Attitudes Toward NGOs and Civil Society in Croatia, 2000 & 2002.

Question	2000	2002	t
IMPORTANT	3.67 (405, 1.19)	2.71 (372, 1.36)	10.47**
COOPERATE	3.97 (406, 1.17)	3.59 (385, 1.14)	4.60**
PARTICIPATE	2.77 (406, 1.42)	3.89 (383, 1.90)	-12.52**

Note: n values and standard deviations in parentheses.
Note: ** p < .01.
Note: IMPORTANT = NGOs are important for improving the situation in Croatia.
Note: COOPERATE = NGOs should cooperate with government to improve the situation in Croatia.
Note: PARTICIPATE = I want to participate in civil society.

However, in 2002, we see significant drops in the levels of agreement for both of these statements. The drop is particularly pronounced for citizen attitudes regarding the importance of NGOs (2000 = 3.67, 2002 = 2.71; $p < .01$). The decline is less pronounced, though still statistically significant, for the cooperation issue (2000 = 3.97, 2002 = 3.56; $p < .01$). In terms of citizens' desire to participate in civil society, we see a dramatic increase from 2000 to 2002 (2000 = 2.77; 2002 = 3.89; $p < .01$). Table 6 presents the results from a series of open-ended questions in which respondents in 2002 were asked to name those NGOS that were a) most active; b) most trusted; and c) most influential in civil society initiatives. Response rates for each question varied. The question about the *most active* NGO garnered a total of 279 answers. The question about the *most influential* NGO elicited a total of 191 responses. The final question about the *most trusted* NGO prompted 179 answers. It appears that GONG, an NGO dedicated to election education, is overwhelmingly considered the most active, the most trusted, and the most influential in the development of civil society in Croatia. The Croatian Helsinki Organization (HHO) is considered to be active and influential in civil society, but is not as trusted as other organizations. Green Action, an environmental NGO, appears to be viewed as less active and influential, but seemingly more trusted than all of the organizations except GONG.

Table 6.
Attitudes Toward Individual NGOs (open-ended responses).

NGO Name	Most Active	Most Influential	Most Trusted
GONG (Election Reform)	110[1] (39%)[2]	46 (24%)	69 (39%)
HHO (Human Rights)	43 (15%)	37 (19%)	5 (3%)
Iskorak (Gay and Lesbian)	17 (6%)	1 (.5%)	4 (2%)
Green Action (Environmental)	15 (5%)	3 (2%)	25 (14%)
Sindikati (Labor Union)	10 (4%)	4 (2%)	20 (11%)

Finally, Table 7 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, with citizens' response to the statement "I want to participate in civil society" as the dependent variable. This analysis sought to determine whether any relationship exists between the primary political information sources utilized by citizens, their assessment of the importance of the various media outlets available to them, and their willingness to participate in civil society. Thus, the key independent variables are the individual information sources analyzed in Table 2, and the importance question utilized as part of the civil society scale presented in Table 4. In addition, control variables were incorporated for factors such as age, gender. Because questions that asked respondents to assess most Croatian media outlets were posed only in 2002, only 2002 responses were used in this analysis.

As Table 7 indicates, the model explained virtually none of the variance in the dependent variable, with none of the independent variables significant at the .05 level. Tolerance statistics ranged from .57 to .97, indicating no danger of a multicollinearity problem. Thus, while citizens' desire to participate in civil society seems to be increasing, this increased desire does not appear to be a function of

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[1] Total number of respondents who identified this organization.

[2] Percentage of the total number of responses to this question.

the information sources utilized by citizens, nor of the particular media outlets they rely upon most heavily, as measured by their assessment of the importance of these outlets.

Table 7.

Information Sources/Assessments and Willingness to Participate in Civil Society (N = 221).

Independent Variable	Beta	t
Newspaper	.04	.57
Radio	- .08	-.91
Internet	.08	1.11
Personal Contacts	.06	.70
Television	-.001	-.02
HRT importance	-.05	-.58
CCN importance	-.001	-.02
R101 importance	.09	1.06
OTV importance	-.03	-.39
ZAG importance	-.002	-.02
JL importance	.15	1.91
VL importance	.06	.74
Gender (1 = female; 2 = male)	- .12	-1.83

Adjusted R^2 = .02 (p > .05).
** p < .01.

Discussion

  This two point-in-time case study provides a picture of the changing public perceptions of media and NGOs as Croatia moved through the initial steps toward EU accession. The results suggest several noteworthy findings for international media and civil society scholars. First, few Croatian media outlets are perceived to be contributing to civil society development. Second, changes in channel use have occurred, and Croatians are beginning to use the media for decision making and passing information along to others. In particular, Internet usage seems to be related to a person's willingness to participate in civil society. Third, Croatians believe that NGOs are not as important in 2002, as they were in 2000, to improving the situation in the nation. Likewise, the public only barely supports the idea of NGOs and the government cooperating to improve the situation in the nation. These findings have implications for understanding how media and NGOs can contribute to civil society and can inform future civil society initiatives.

Where Are the Civil Society-Oriented Media?

The public responses show that there is growing differentiation among the media outlets. There is two point-in time data for two of the media outlets. It appears that Radio 101 has consistently remained a key actor in the civil society transition; its scores have fluctuated little over the two-year period. But the evolving perceptions about HRT is of more importance to understanding civil society. In 2000, the new reform-minded Mesic government introduced a media reform law to "transform state and radio television into public service broadcasters" that respect "the standards of free and fair broadcasting" (IREX, 2002, p. 33). The law was adapted in early 2001, but few details have been agreed upon by the various political actors. The data do suggest that HRT, with its new public service charter, is contributing to civil society values more than other outlets in 2002. HRT's scores from 2000 to 2002 show that the change in editorial policy and the end of its political affiliation with the HDZ have been noticed by the public. Research in other transitional media systems has also concluded that government media have a role to play in civil society. Ramaprasad (2003) found that in Tanzania, the government media (rather than the independent media) are believed to "help unify the country, develop it, and focus on cultural and intellectual issues" (p. 20).

The 2002 data set included five additional media outlets. Table 4 shows that four of the five added media outlets appear to have similar civil society scores (means ranging from 3.1-3.4), with only Zagrebacki Radio rated as quite low (M = 2.38). The four additional outlets in this 2002 data set elicit only moderate public recognition of their contribution to the goals of civil society. CCN, Otvoreni Radio, and the two national papers, *Jutarnji List* and *Vercernji List*, appear closely matched to HRT's most recent score. The findings suggest that media outlets can be rehabilitated, if the government is committed to their development as free and objective information sources. This is an important step for Croatia's membership in the EU.

Changes in Media and Information Uses

In the 2000 study, Croatians were using the media primarily for entertainment purposes. In 2002, the data detect a shift in the ways in which they use their media. The most dramatic shift is in the entertainment area, with significant difference between Time 1 and Time 2. It appears that Croatians are now using information gathered from the media to make decisions and to pass along information to other people, as shown by Table 3. These are crucial communication processes for civil society. This finding is important when considered in conjunction with the data about preferred channels and civil society contributions by different media outlets. Table 2 shows that television, followed by newspapers and radio, are the most frequently consulted media channels. And the data from Table 4 suggests that the four most credible outlets, respectively, are Radio 101, *Vecernji List*, Radio Otvoreni, and HRT. There seems to be a slight disconnect between the channels that people are consulting and the outlets they consider as contributing to civil society.

The Changing Role of NGOs

A major component of civil society is the existence and activities of NGOs. In Croatia, there are dozens of small and large NGOs. What is their role in the development of civil society? The data are mixed. The respondents in this study have changing perceptions about the importance of NGOs. In Time 1, respondents believed that NGOs were important to improving the situation in the nation. In Time 2, their view of NGOs as being important seems to be diminishing. NGOs, in general, are perceived to be less important. Additionally, there was a shift in perceptions of NGOs working with the government to improve the situation in Croatia. In Time 2, people appear less supportive of the NGOs sharing an equal role with government in civil society. Yet, at the same time, respondents indicated they are more willing to participate in civil society.

Recent political and social events may provide context for these paradoxical findings. First, it may be that when Tudjman died in 1999, most people in Croatia were ready for a political change. The NGOs at the forefront of the 2000 election reform campaign enjoyed enormous support from the public as they helped to ensure free and fair elections. After the elections in 2000, many NGOs returned to their original missions (women's issues, the environment, etc.) and may have disappeared from public view. By 2002, Croatians may have become comfortable with the political reforms; they may have forgotten the NGOs that helped to create these reforms. Another reason may be that the elections of a new president and parliament had many Croatians believing that things would improve immediately. However, Croatia's problems were not solely related to the Tudjman regime and the HDZ. Everyday issues such as unemployment and inflation take time to be resolved and reflect systemic, not only political, problems. The new parliament and the Mesic government have not been able to resolve these persistent economic problems. Public frustration has grown over the last few years because the growth of democracy has not been followed by economic growth.

A look at recent political events may provide some context for these findings. The 2003 parliamentary elections and 2004/2005 presidential elections reflected this mood of frustration. Voter turnout was much lower than in the first parliamentary election of 2000, when almost 80% of the eligible electorate voted, compared to only 60% in 2003. In 2003, the HDZ won a majority of seats in the parliament. President Mesic was reelected in 2005 after a tough election run-off. His presidency continues to work with the HDZ power block in parliament. Within this context, the findings about NGOs being perceived as less important and less involved in civil society than the government are not surprising. Croatians appear to "have expected too much and had great expectations that the independence itself would be enough" (DPA, January 15, 2004, p. 1). It appears that the 2002 data about NGOs and civil society may be tapping into this political reality. Yet, when Time 1 and Time 2 are compared, people are more willing to participate in civil society in the latter period. This is a positive sign as Croatia moves toward EU membership, and it will be important to see (and study) if this willingness continues as Croatia's membership draws nearer.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore how the media and NGOs contribute to the development of civil society in Croatia's movement toward EU accession. It measured changes in public perceptions of different types of media and examined how the public understands the roles of NGOs during an important time in Croatia's application for EU membership. The picture that emerges is of a public that is changing the way that it uses its media. Today, it appears that people use the information they gather from the news media to make decisions and to share with others. Television remains an important source of information, and Croatians are also discerning about their media choices. Public support for the reformulated HRT suggests that its new editorial policy is improving the civil society contributions of this once politically motivated outlet. Radio is also frequently used as an information source, and the people in Zagreb have a variety of radio stations to listen to. The independent station, Radio 101, continues to enjoy the highest scores over the two-year period.

The NGO sector has also seen changes in how the public perceives its contributions. The exuberance of the 2000 election has given way to frustration in 2002. Croatians seem less willing to identify NGOs as important to the development of civil society and less willing to perceive NGOs as equal partners with the government in improving the situation in Croatia. When asked about active, influential, and trusted NGOs, 40% to 50% of the respondents cited only two: GONG and the Croatian chapter of Helsinki Human Rights. Although there are hundreds of NGOs registered with the government, only these two have emerged as national leaders in the open-ended answers of Croatians. It would be unfortunate for civil society development in Croatia if the roles of NGOs were merely limited to election times.

The findings of this longitudinal study raise additional questions that should be examined in future studies. Continued research can track changes in public perceptions of media and NGOs as Croatia moves to 2009 or 2010 full membership in the EU. Additional longitudinal studies will tell us if HRT continues to improve in its civil society mission, and if new NGOs emerge as active, trusted, and influential leaders. Finally, the findings suggest that civil society development is a complex and dynamic process. It does not happen overnight. It requires multiple methods, multiple theories, and multiple frameworks to understand how civil society is developed and what roles the media play in political development.

It is important to note that Croatia's movement toward full EU membership is not dependent on its media, NGOs, or even its citizens' willingness to participate in civil society. Croatia's accession is actually tied to its cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, but its political leaders have shown little willingness to find and hand over war criminals from the 1991-1995 break-up of the former Yugoslavia. This is perhaps the greatest role the media and NGOs have to play in civil society development in Croatia — to move the government to take action. If the media and NGOs succeed, it may be their defining moment and proof that they have begun to fully enact their civil society role.

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